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Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'EU and Agenda 2030: strengthening the implementation of the SDGs'

(exploratory opinion requested by the Spanish Presidency)

(C/2024/876)

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. Alarmingly the UN special edition of the SDGs Progress Report reveals that many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are off track globally, halfway through the SDG timeline⁽¹⁾. According to this report, a preliminary assessment of the roughly 140 targets with data show only about 12 % are on track; close to half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track and some 30 % have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

1.2. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) reiterates that, despite the fact that the Commission considers the SDGs a key part of the political guidelines, the EU needs an integrated, comprehensive strategy with ambitious long-term goals and plans, in order to accelerate progress on the SDGs at the European and global level. Instead of addressing the goals separately, the EU should adopt a holistic approach to reduce the complexity of its policies and instruments for sustainable development.

1.3. The EESC emphasises that the Commission needs to make a long-term political commitment, which has to go beyond this term of office. It must commit to involving stakeholders at an early stage in designing and setting the agenda, to ensuring that the other institutions are represented, and to providing appropriate resources to ensure meaningful and inclusive civil society organisation participation. The SDGs have to be a long-term commitment even beyond 2030.

1.4. The EESC stresses the need to engage civil society, the public and private sectors, academia, and youth and women's organisations in the implementation of the SDGs. Given the recent positive outcome of the EESC as a facilitator in reflecting the view of civil society organisations in the EU Voluntary Review, we urge the Commission to build with the EESC a convening space for regular and structured civil society dialogue with the participation of companies, trade unions and civil society organisations that work on the ground.

1.5. The EESC believes that other key enablers in accelerating SGD implementation are societal acceptance by proportionately sharing the costs and benefits of the transition, a proactive communication strategy against the anti-2030 agenda, further investments and alignment of the SDGs with the European Semester, multilateralism and building a strong SDG/Green Deal Diplomacy. The cost of the transition should not be unbearable for companies, workers or the rest of society.

⁽¹⁾ United Nations, Economic and Social Council (May 2023), *Special edition: progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals Report of the Secretary-General*, New York, USA.

2. State of play according to the European Commission

2.1. According to the European Commission, the SDGs constitute a key part of President von der Leyen's political guidelines and the European Commission's annual work plans ⁽²⁾. The Commission follows a 'Whole-of-Government approach' to implementing the SDGs, and prioritises them in EU legislation, policy and funding ⁽³⁾ ⁽⁴⁾.

2.2. In July 2023, the European Commission presented its first EU Voluntary Review, reaffirming the EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and reflecting the input of civil society. The Review takes stock of the EU's progress in implementing the SDGs both internally and externally ⁽⁵⁾.

2.3. The latest edition of the Eurostat report, *Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition* highlights the progress made by the EU since 2015. While progress has been moderate in most areas, significant strides have been taken towards three specific goals ⁽⁶⁾. Nevertheless, the pace of progress has slowed down and even regressed in certain areas since 2020 because of multiple crises including the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency and the war in Ukraine. While the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are already visible in the data, only short-term effects of the war in Ukraine can be analysed. Overall, significant progress has been made towards a few socioeconomic goals and more efforts are necessary to ensure environmental protection and sustainable use of resources.

More progress needed on SDG 13, SDG 15 and SDG 17

2.4. On climate action (SDG 13), while it is estimated that a 30 % reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions has already been achieved, more effort than in the past years is needed to attain the ambitious 55 % target by 2030 ⁽⁷⁾.

2.5. Slight improvements can be observed in terms of life on land (SDG 15) and more effort is needed to reverse the degradation of land and biodiversity. Production processes in the EU need to be reviewed, improved and innovated in a more consistent way and consumption patterns need to be directed towards real sustainable solutions at all levels of European and global supply chains.

2.6. Progress on partnerships for the goals (SDG 17) has been moderately negative, with improvements only seen in two areas: imports from developing countries and the share of households with high-speed internet ⁽⁸⁾. According to the OECD ⁽⁹⁾, the share allocated to Official Development Assistance (ODA) is insufficient in most EU countries, and they have not progressed towards the target of 0,7 % of GNI as ODA by 2030 ⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽²⁾ European Commission, 2023, *EU holistic approach to sustainable development*.

⁽³⁾ European Commission, 2023, *EU Voluntary Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

⁽⁴⁾ SWD(2020) 400 final: *Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals — A comprehensive approach*.

⁽⁵⁾ European Commission, 2023, *EU Voluntary Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

⁽⁶⁾ Eurostat, 2023. *Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition*.

⁽⁷⁾ Eurostat, 2023. *Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition*.

⁽⁸⁾ Eurostat, 2023. *Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition*.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Eurostat, 2023. *Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition*.

2.7. According to the European Court of Auditors special report about the EU climate and energy targets ⁽¹¹⁾, there are few indications that ambitious EU targets will translate into sufficient action to reach the 2030 targets in the context of the European Green Deal, the Fit-for-55 package and REPowerEU.

Progress on the rest of the SDGs

2.8. There has been significant progress in the EU towards ensuring decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) ⁽¹²⁾. The EU experienced a record high employment rate (74,6 %) in 2022 and is on track to reach the 2030 target. The share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training was at an all-time low in 2022 and the 2030 target of 9 % is in reach. Investment continued to grow significantly in 2022 and peaked at 23,2 % of GDP ⁽¹³⁾.

2.9. In terms of poverty reduction (SDG 1), the EU witnessed improvements across poverty dimensions in the period up to 2019, resulting in an increasing number of people being able to meet their basic needs. Since 2020, the poverty reduction rate has largely been too low, and there are considerable differences in poverty rates among the EU Member States, with children and young people particularly affected by poverty and social exclusion ⁽¹⁴⁾.

2.10. Progress on gender equality (SDG 5) has been relatively positive ⁽¹⁵⁾. The gender wage gap has narrowed and women continue to occupy an increasing number of leadership positions. However, while the gender employment gap has narrowed, stronger progress is needed to achieve the 2030 goal. Conversely, men continue to fall behind women in tertiary education attainment.

2.11. The EU has made good progress on reducing inequalities (SDG 10), providing quality education (SDG 4), establishing peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), promoting good health and well-being (SDG 3) and advancing industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) ⁽¹⁶⁾. However, progress in achieving responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), life below water (SDG 14), zero hunger (SDG 2) and clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) ⁽¹⁷⁾ has been moderate. Additionally, while there has been moderate progress in affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), recent data does not account for the energy-related implications of the war in Ukraine, as provided in the 2023 European Semester: Spring Package ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Effects of international spill-overs

2.12. The EU has also made progress in generating positive spill-overs in terms of gross value added (GVA) while simultaneously reducing its net imports of raw materials ⁽¹⁹⁾.

⁽¹¹⁾ Special report 18/2023: EU climate and energy targets — 2020 targets achieved, but little indication that actions to reach the 2030 targets will be sufficient.

⁽¹²⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

⁽¹³⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

⁽¹⁸⁾ European Commission, 2023, 2023 *European Semester: Spring Package*.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Eurostat, 2023. Sustainable development in the European Union — monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, 2023 edition.

2.13. Regarding future policies, the EU has to be cautious that its policy approaches do not to generate new negative international spill-overs associated with its consumption (be it energy, emissions, raw materials, food or consumer goods, etc.).

3. State of play according to civil society organisations

3.1. The fact that civil society organisations come with a more critical picture is not surprising; this is largely because those reports also incorporate non-official data from reliable sources like Transparency International, they follow up on a broader range of indicators and take more into account the EU's impact on other countries.

3.2. In this context, the EESC notes that, according to civil society organisations, after three years of consecutive crises, the achievement of the SDGs is in serious peril. The latest Sustainable Development Report ⁽²⁰⁾ and the UN Secretary General's report highlight the setbacks these crises have caused for the SDGs and human development globally. However, in a context of increased geopolitical tensions and weakened multilateralism, it is crucial to recognise the enormous value of the SDGs and the Agenda 2030, as the most comprehensive, ambitious and universal roadmap for sustainable socioeconomic prosperity within planetary boundaries. Failing to implement the SDG principles could lead to further crises, making it even more important for the European Union to redouble its efforts and use the SDGs as a compass for increased ambition internally and increased dialogue and cooperation externally.

3.3. Several reports have recently documented the underperformance on sustainable development around the world and in Europe on a global scale. Alarming the UN special edition of the SDGs Progress Report reveals that many of the SDGs are off track globally, halfway through the SDG timeline ⁽²¹⁾. According to this report, a preliminary assessment of the roughly 140 targets with data show only about 12 % are on track; close to half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track and some 30 % have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

3.4. Civil society reports based on available trend data indicate that the EU was already not on track to achieve all SDGs even before the pandemic. Progress, albeit not at the right pace, has stalled since 2020 ⁽²²⁾. Currently, the EU is on track to achieve around 66 % of the SDG targets included in the Europe Sustainable Development Report ⁽²³⁾, but there has been limited progress on 20 % of the indicators and regression on 13 %. The EU faces significant challenges in areas such as responsible consumption and production, sustainable food systems, climate action and the health of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems (SDG 2 and SDGs 12–15). Additionally, performance gaps across countries are evident on SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure).

3.5. In addition, inequalities within countries have increased in several Member States over the past two years, as shown by the lack of progress in many dimensions of the 'leave no one behind' Index at EU level ⁽²⁴⁾. Achieving SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) in Europe is challenging, partly due to only four EU Member States meeting the target of dedicating 0,7 % of their gross national income to Official Development Assistance.

⁽²⁰⁾ Sachs, J.; Lafortune, G.; Kroll, C.; Fuller, G.; Woelm, F., *Sustainable Development Report 2022: From Crisis to Sustainable Development: The SDGs as Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2022.

⁽²¹⁾ United Nations, Economic and Social Committee (May 2023), *Special edition: progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals Report of the Secretary-General*, New York, USA.

⁽²²⁾ Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., Bermont Diaz, L., Kloeke-Lesch, A., Koundouri, P., Riccaboni, A. (2022), *Achieving the SDGs: Europe's Compass in a Multipolar World*, *Europe Sustainable Development Report 2022*, SDSN and SDSN Europe, Paris, France.

⁽²³⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs — the civil society contribution' (own-initiative opinion) (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 14).

⁽²⁴⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs — the civil society contribution' (own-initiative opinion) (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 14).

3.6. Civil society organisations have also identified that certain EU policies and instruments, such as the EU Social Pillar Action Plan ⁽²⁵⁾ and the European Green Deal ⁽²⁶⁾, are not adequately aligned with the SDGs ⁽²⁷⁾. They also reiterate the insufficient involvement of civil society actors in the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs in the EU.

4. Policies ahead: key enablers for achieving the SDGs

4.1. The EESC is concerned about the fragmented approach of EU legislation towards achieving the SDGs. Instead, the EU and the Member States need an integrated, comprehensive strategy to achieve the SDGs at the European and global level. To simplify sustainable development policies and effectively engage with citizens and scientists effectively, the EESC has been calling to adopt an overarching strategy ⁽²⁸⁾ with a holistic approach rather than segmenting the goals and addressing them separately.

4.2. Targets, timelines and roadmaps are required to clarify how the EU plans to achieve the 17 SDGs. It could rely on a more operational approach, such as the Six Transformations approach ⁽²⁹⁾, which organises all the SDGs into six profound transformations. Each transformation is aligned with government organisation and describes a major change in social, economic, political and technological structures, underpinned by the circularity and 'leave no one behind' principles. This framework has been adapted to the European context ⁽³⁰⁾ to provide a narrative that is operational and easy to communicate, and to help build on synergies and address trade-offs across goals and targets. The EESC considers it an interesting approach that deserves a closer look and that could serve as a benchmark on how to operationalise the SDGs. It is also paramount to update the plan regularly and keep the objectives permanent even beyond 2030.

4.3. Other policies not directly linked to the SDGs at first sight may also contribute to more sustainable, and at the same time improved, lifestyles for citizens, which will further foster the SDGs. Time policies on organising timetables, working time, leisure time and other aspects of time in people's lives, as well as urban planning, for example, could improve school and work performance, reconcile family and working life, develop more Smart Cities with adequate public transport systems, etc. Even if these policies need to be developed and implemented at regional and national levels, they nevertheless also have to meet EU policy goals. Special attention needs to be given to the reduction of territorial imbalances between cities and the countryside so as to avoid the depopulation and abandonment of rural areas.

4.4. Moreover, public management practices and procedures, particularly public procurement, and regulatory impact assessments, should also be leveraged to prevent unintended consequences of domestic policies. Consumption-based targets, diet and energy efficiency measures, and innovation can help curb spill-overs in the food, minerals and other supply chains. Such a package of policies should be supported by a clear communication strategy, enforcement mechanisms where necessary and comprehensive data systems at EU, national, industry and corporate levels.

4.5. The SDGs must be localised if they are to be achieved. Local and regional players that commit to linking their policies to the SDGs will be key to success. This localisation must be supported by effective management arrangements at multiple levels. In addition to including the SDGs in local development plans, incentives should be put in place to encourage public and private stakeholders to collaborate, innovate and jointly design solutions through a multisectoral approach.

⁽²⁵⁾ International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) 2023. *Halfway to 2030: A trade union take on the EU and the SDGs*, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/halfway-to-2030-a-trade-union-take-on-the-eu-and-the-sdgs?lang=en>

⁽²⁶⁾ Koundouri, P., et al (2022). *Financing the Joint Implementation of the SDGs and the European Green Deal. 2nd report of the SDSN Senior Working Group on the European Green Deal*. SDSN Europe.

⁽²⁷⁾ SDG Watch Europe (2023). *How far is Europe from achieving the SDGs? Civil Society Spotlight Report*. <https://sdgwatcheurope.org/imagining-europe-beyond-growth/>

⁽²⁸⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs — the civil society contribution' (own-initiative opinion) (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 14).

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://resources.unsdsn.org/six-transformations-to-achieve-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs>

⁽³⁰⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs — the civil society contribution' (own-initiative opinion) (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 14).

Systematically monitor dialogue and create a firm database

4.6. Strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and science-based pathways should be central to European policymaking. Listening to and taking into account the ideas and concerns of companies, trade unions and civil society organisations that work on the ground and have a clear view of the economy and social needs will accelerate the process and avoid drawbacks during the implementation of new policies.

4.7. During the drafting of the EU Voluntary Review, the EESC played a key role in gathering civil society organisations' points of view, which were then included in the final document. Given the successful collaboration in this task, the EESC urges the Commission to build along with the EESC a convening space for civil society's structural involvement in the implementation of the SDGs. For this purpose, it is important to have the long-term political commitment of the Commission, which needs to go beyond this term of office, involve the stakeholders at an early stage in the design and setting of the agenda, ensure the representation of other institutions and adequate resources to guarantee meaningful and inclusive CSO participation. It would also be useful to establish cooperation with major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) and their regional coordinators, in order to present their views to EU and UN bodies and give greater visibility to the demands of various MGoS ⁽³¹⁾.

4.8. With reference to proposal 39 from the final report on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EESC offers its unique role within the EU institutional architecture in order to facilitate and moderate citizens' panels which relate to a better achievement of the SDGs. The EESC is convinced that deliberative democratic processes can improve policies and strengthen economic and social cohesion, particularly in such demanding transitional times. Young people and education are key for achieving the SDGs as young people will be most impacted by current decisions and are increasingly concerned about the future.

4.9. Youth and women's organisations are paramount in promoting sustainable development and should be empowered to translate the SDGs into national, regional and local policies. The EU should increase the impact of European youth and women on SDG policy and decision-making at all levels, following the EESC's good examples of youth engagement with the EESC youth COP delegate and the EU sustainability round tables.

4.10. Good policymaking evolves on the basis of robust data: for the European context, tracking and assessing progress in implementing the SDGs is key, also with regard to external relations with partner countries outside the EU. The EESC calls on Eurostat to systematically include performance data from the European Semester in its SDG database in order to better assess SDG performance within the European Union. Eurostat has to remain the official source on data, but it also needs to improve and consider a more innovative approach to indicators. Furthermore, there are CSOs that have very specific and very valuable data; these should be taken into consideration by policymakers on a case-by-case approach.

4.11. The EESC is surprised to note that the Commission's analysis is based on data up to 2019, especially in relation to SDG 1 on poverty. As a result of the multiple crises that have occurred since then, i.e. COVID-19, the rise in interest rates, high inflation and energy prices, and other effects linked to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the situation for many families has worsened. As regards child and youth poverty: in 2021, an estimated 24,4 % of children (under the age of 18) in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared with 21,1 % of adults (aged 18 years and over) ⁽³²⁾. The latest figures show that 20 % of young people aged 15–29 were at risk of poverty in 2021, while the at-risk-of-poverty rate for the total population of the EU stood at 17 % ⁽³³⁾. In addition to this, according to FAO, 122 million more people globally faced hunger in 2022 than in 2019, with food insecurity worsening in Europe ⁽³⁴⁾.

⁽³¹⁾ See also *Strengthening multilateralism and core international principles for a rules-based order in a rapidly changing world — The importance of civil society contribution to the UN system*.

⁽³²⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20221027-2>

⁽³³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_LI02_custom_5706066/default/table?lang=en

⁽³⁴⁾ <https://www.fao.org/3/cc3017en/online/state-food-security-and-nutrition-2023/food-security-nutrition-indicators.html>

Promotion of more investment in people and infrastructure

4.12. The SDGs are largely an investment agenda into human capital (health, education, social protection) and physical infrastructure (electrification, clean energy, digital infrastructure). For this reason, the EU needs an expansive approach directing public and private investment flows into the achievement of the SDGs. This requires coherent and improved national planning, regulation, reporting, and oversight. Also in that context, aligning the Semester with the SDGs could be an effective way to promote a new economic model that is sustainable and inclusive ⁽³⁵⁾.

4.13. Societal acceptance of the SDGs can also be increased by highlighting the intrinsic link between sustainable development policies and welfare, healthy economies, the rule of law, fundamental rights, i.e. the pillars of the long-term well-being of society. Communicating clearly on how the achievement of the SDGs will positively impact various society groups is important. In particular, it is crucial to showcase how the SDGs create value for businesses, such as revenue generation through market differentiation, spawning investors' interest and increasing supply chain resilience ⁽³⁶⁾.

4.14. Explaining the importance of the SDGs in a simple manner and highlighting the benefits can help increase societal acceptance. Understanding of the importance of the SDGs starts with either formal or informal education ⁽³⁷⁾. Fake news related to adverse effects of the 2030 Agenda need adequate responses. Given that the distorted narrative on negative effects of sustainable development has been adopted by some populist movements that promote conspiracy theories, but in particular by extreme-right political parties, it is paramount to adopt a proactive and fact-based communication strategy in view of the upcoming EU elections.

4.15. Another element that will help in making the SDGs socially acceptable is for people to see that not only the costs but also the benefits of the transition towards a greener, fairer and prosperous world are also proportionately distributed. Moreover, to gain people's trust in this sense, Member States and the EU have to demonstrate their capacity to guarantee that such distribution is actually achieved. The cost of the transition should not be unbearable for companies, workers or the rest of society.

The external perspective: Multilateralism and Green Diplomacy

4.16. The EU played an important role leading up to the adoption of the SDGs and should now play a leading role in promoting a stronger SDG global commitment. The EU should spearhead SDG/Green Deal Diplomacy at the 2023 SDG Summit, COP28 and the 2024 Summit of the Future.

4.17. As low and middle-income countries face major fiscal space issues and lack access to international capital to invest in the 2030 Agenda, the EU should implement and reinforce commitments made at COP27 and the G20 Summit in Bali supporting the UN Secretary-General's call for the SDG stimulus to share the burden of financing climate change adaptation and loss and damage costs among the countries most responsible. Besides a massive scale-up in SDG financing via increased lending capacity of multilateral development banks, the EU should push for a major reform of the global financial architecture and international institutions including the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF. By taking bold actions to strengthen international SDG financing and the UN systems, the EU can rally other countries to its values centred on human dignity, freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

4.18. Moreover, the EESC urges to strengthen the effort in reaching the goal of 0,7 % of the Gross National Product in Official Development Assistance to promote the sustainable economic development and welfare of developing countries as soon as possible, but no later than 2030. This includes EU funds, as well as the funds of the Member States.

⁽³⁵⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the EESC's recommendations for a solid reform of the European Semester (own-initiative opinion) (OJ C 228, 29.6.2023, p. 1).

⁽³⁶⁾ UNDP (not available). SDG Accelerator. Business and the SDGs, <https://www.undp.org/sdg-accelerator/business-and-sdgs>

⁽³⁷⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Empowering youth to achieve sustainable development through education' (own-initiative opinion) (OJ C 100, 16.3.2023, p. 38).

Minimising negative international spill-overs

4.19. The EU's consumption is associated with significant negative environmental and social spill-overs in the world. The EU has recently increased its efforts to monitor and curb negative international spill-overs embodied in unsustainable supply chains, notably by collaborating on transition pathways with partner countries. Robust bilateral trade agreements that are in the best interest of the EU and third countries are important and they should include mirror clauses related to the SDGs, not only to avoid spill-overs and help other countries increase their standards but also as a way to be fair to the EU companies and sectors, in particular the primary sector, that are making an effort and financial investment to achieve the SDGs.

4.20. Current legislative acts in the EU, which are already under discussion, should be seen as effective opportunities to speed up the process of achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The Proposal for a Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD⁽³⁸⁾), the proposal for the ban of products made with forced labour⁽³⁹⁾ and the fulfilment of the recommendations mentioned in the decent work worldwide communication⁽⁴⁰⁾ can contribute to reaching SDGs 12 and 8 respectively. Furthermore, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation and the Energy Efficiency Directive will have a positive effect on achieving the SDGs and negative spill-over effects. Finally, the EESC believes that the EU has to play a leading role in achieving the 2030 Agenda SDGs with its global partners. The EU should continue its efforts on the global stage and aim to continuously improve supportive agreements like the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Brussels, 25 October 2023.

*The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee*
Oliver RÖPKE

⁽³⁸⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Mandatory due Diligence' (exploratory opinion) (OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 136), Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Corporate Sustainability, Due Diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (COM(2022) 71 final) (OJ C 443, 22.11.2022, p. 81).

⁽³⁹⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Prohibiting products made with forced labour in the Union market' (COM(2022) 453 final) (OJ C 140, 21.4.2023, p. 75).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on a Decent work worldwide (COM(2022) 66 final) (OJ C 486, 21.12.2022, p. 149).